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ABSTRACT

An inservice teacher education learning module is described which focuses on skill building in organizing independent learning in primary level classrooms. Content of the minicourse emphasizes acquiring information and practicing skills of helping pupils understand independent work, solve problems, and accept delayed teacher response, and of combining independent activity and small-group instruction on a permanent basis. Information is provided about course purposes, content, activities, resources, and history of development. A critique and ordering information are also included. (DS)

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DESCRIPTION OF TEACHER IN-SERVICE EDUCATION MATERIALS

A. SUMMARY INFORMATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Title: ORGANIZING INDEPENDENT LEARNING: PRIMARY LEVEL (Minicourse 8)

Publication Date(s): 1971

Intended Users: Elementary teachers seeking information on developing an independent learning environment

Grade Level(s): K-3

Number: Maximum of 15 (in one school) per videotape recorder

Primary Focus: Skill building in organizing independent learning in primary level classrooms is the main focus of the product.

School subject(s) and/or in-service topic(s) covered: This product: develops teacher skill in establishing an environment in which pupils may work independently. Producer specifies no limitations on subject matter applicability; illustrative material is drawn from science, social science, math, language arts, and art. In-service content emphasizes acquiring information and practicing skills of helping pupils understand independent work, solve problems, and accept delayed teacher response and of combining independent activity and small group instruction on a permanent basis.

What participant does in using the materials:

In each of four instructional sequences, teachers (1) read about a set of skills in the Teachers Handbook, (2) view a film explaining and illustrating these skills, (3) plan and teach lessons in which they practice the skills, and (4) self-evaluate the lessons. Practice lessons include both "microteaching," in which teachers videotape lessons taught outside the regular classroom to 3 or 4 pupils, and "reteaching," in which the same skills are repracticed with the entire class.

Resources: Described as "self-instructional," the course requires no instructor; a coordinator is recommended to facilitate operation. Activities require about 1 hour per day for sixteen days during a suggested four-week period. Each participant needs four 1-hour periods of released time for microteaching. Space and equipment are required in each shool with participating teachers as follows: One videotape system per maximum group of fifteen; one small room for microteaching; and a 16mm sound film projector. Each teacher also needs a 20-minute reel of videotape.

Describer critique:

This would be most simply used by one to fifteen teachers in one school. With proper coordination, equipment and space could also be used for larger groups in one school, simultaneously at several schools, or sequentially at multiple sites. In large-scale applications, the coordinator's role is critical in meeting scheduling/equipment problems. The self-instructional character of the materials may make this course particularly attractive to many.

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B. IN-DEPTH INFORMATION

Title: ORGANIZING INDEPENDENT LEARNING: PRIMARY LEVEL (Minicourse 8)

Publication Date(s): 1971

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Number: Maximum of 15 (in one school) per videotape recorder

Primary Focus: Skill building in organizing independent learning in primary level classrooms is the main focus of this product.

1.0 PURPOSES:

The Coordinators Handbook states: "To meet the specific learning needs of children in kindergarten and the primary grades, special time is needed to facilitate individual growth, yet in most classrooms, this time is not available. Therefore, this course has been developed to help the teacher make such time available so that small-group instruction and independent learning activities can both function effectively." Handbook also states that a minicourse is different from microteaching in that it is a "self-contained package" that provides teacher feedback through self-evaluation rather than through a supervisor. A minicourse also provides for trying out new skills in a setting less demanding than a regular classroom, learning skills through direct experience, and obtaining immediate feedback and reinforcement on one's own teaching.

The course objective is stated as "to develop teacher skill in organizing the classroom for independent learning." In support of this general objective, each of the four instructional sequences has as its expected outcome teacher acquisition of a series of skills:

1. Establish (with pupils) the concept of working independently.
2. Lead to pupil skill in solving problems that occur during independent work periods.
3. Develop teacher-learner expectations for delayed teacher response to pupil work.
4. Enable the teacher to "combine independent work, problem-solving, and delayed response into a learning environment using independent activity and small-group instruction."

2.0 CONTENT — Scope and Sequencing of Topics:

The specific teaching skills expected to be acquired as a result of completing each instructional sequence are as follows:

SEQUENCE I (establish concept of working independently) "1. Discuss 'working' alone with pupils using a story or example. 2. Elicit examples of working alone from pupils. 3. Explain role of teacher while pupils are working independently."

SEQUENCE II (develop pupil skill in solving problems) "1. Help pupils identify problems that might be met... 2. Seek from pupils alternate solutions to problems. 3. Evaluate alternate solutions. 4. Set standards for what to do when finished with assigned activity. 5. Evaluate pupils' success at solving problems while working independently."

SEQUENCE III (develop expectations for delayed teacher response) "1. Discuss with pupils the difference between immediate and delayed teacher response... 2. Demonstrate delayed teacher response... 3. Use verbal and nonverbal cues to help pupils adjust to delayed response."

SEQUENCE IV (combine independent work, problem-solving, and delayed response) "1. Review working alone with pupils. 2. Present assigned task. 3. Elicit problems and solutions from pupils. 4. Set standards for what to do when finished. 5. Provide delayed teacher response. 6. Evaluate pupils' success at working independently."

An introductory film "provides general information about the course and prepares teachers for the instructional sequences and model lessons." In the instructional and Model Lesson films, various teachers are seen modeling the skills listed above with students in a variety of subject areas.

Course materials are intended to be used in the established sequence and in their entirety. The Coordinators Handbook states: "Minicourses are designed to provide a complete in-service training experience. Our research indicates that Minicourse 8 is effective when all the course materials are used, following the recommended procedures. We have no evidence that components of the course are effective when used separately. For example, occasionally a teacher will feel that he/she can learn the course skills by just viewing the films. We have no evidence that would substantiate this claim." Variation is encouraged in the content of the microteach and reteach lessons; the sample lessons and teacher-pupil dialogues are illustrative only. No pre-requisites are mentioned.

3.0 ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES INVOLVED IN USE OF PRODUCT

3.1 Description of main in-service activities:

After introductory activities, participants begin the four instructional sequences, each following the same format. On Day I, teachers read individually from a chapter in the Handbook and view together the film for the sequence. On Day II, each participant plans a 10-15 minute microteach lesson to practice the skills presented. On Day III, participants conduct and videotape a microteach lesson with 3-5 of their own pupils in a special microteaching room, then teacher replays the tape, completes the self-evaluation form, and plans a reteach lesson. On Day IV, this reteach lesson is taught to the total class without videotaping, and observations of pupil skill in independent work are recorded.

The Teachers Handbook recommends that depending on pupils' skill, extra practice in independent work be provided to the total class; scheduling and planning are left to the participant.

3.2 Help given in use of product:

The Teachers Handbook provides a sequential list of the activities participants are to complete and gives detailed instructions and forms for planning lessons and self-evaluation of skill acquisition. It also contains appendices presenting 1) discussion of learning centers and of a "work sheet library" that might subsequently be organized; 2) four follow-up lessons (repetitive of the main course) for optional use as a refresher some time after course completion; and 3) a review of the literature on independent learning. In addition, there is a bibliography and schedule for course activities.

The Coordinators Handbook contains highly detailed instructions for course operation (agendas for introductory meetings, procedures for training teachers in use of videotape recorder, sample daily calendar, etc.).

4.0 EVALUATION OF TEACHER INSERVICE LEARNING

Assessment is built into each sequence and is conducted individually. Teachers view videotape of the lesson and complete a "Teacher Self-evaluation Form," recording frequency and quality of their use of the teaching skills. Brief, general criteria (primarily quantitative) are provided. The videotapes and self-evaluation forms are for individual guidance in assessing progress and in planning reteach lessons. The producers recommend that teachers be free to erase their videotapes and that no coordinator, supervisor, etc., review the self-evaluation forms. Coordinators Handbook suggests holding post-course evaluation session.

5.0 ORDERING INFORMATION

5.1 Resources required/recommended:

Intended for use with (1) a videotape recording system, one in each school for a maximum of 15 teachers/VTR, (2)a 12' x 14' room per school, (3) four 1-hour periods of released time over 4-week period per participant, (4) 16mm sound film projector, (5) 20-minute reel of videotape for each teacher, and (6) one coordinator.

An audiotape recorder is an alternative to the VTR. A coordinator is necessary to see that arrangements are made – especially scheduling use of movie projector, VTR, and room(s) to microteach and evaluate videotapes.

5.2 Distributor name/address:

Macmillan Educational Services, Inc.
866 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022
Phone: 212/935-2000

5.3 Components/approximate costs:

Component	Purchase	Rental	No. Req.	Reusable
Teachers Handbook*	$4.50	---	1/participant	No*
Coordinators Handbook	$4.50	---	1/site	Yes
Five 16mm color films	$1145.00	$175/ six weeks	1 set/site	Yes

*The Teachers Handbook is reusable with the exception of the checklists for viewing films, the lesson plan forms, and the self-evaluation and class observation forms. If these materials were reproduced, the Handbook could be used repeatedly.

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6.0 HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Identification of the developer: This inservice product was written by Beatrice A. Ward, Marjorie A. Kelley, and Walter F. Stenning of the Teacher Education Program at the Far West Laboratory and for Educational Research and Development under the direction of Ned A. Flanders. The Mini-courses teacher training format was developed at the Laboraotry under the leadership of Walter R. Borg, original director of the Teacher Education Program, and was adapted from the microteach approach developed at Stanford University.

6.2 How developed and when:

A two and one-half year period of development and testing included three field tests and subsequent revisions of course materials. Over 200 teachers, K-3, in inner city, suburban, and small town school districts took the course in the field tests.

6.3 Evidence of effectiveness with users:

The producers report in the "Preface" to the Teachers Handbook major gains in postcourse use of the teaching skills when compared to precourse use and in pupil acquisition of the learner skills included.

C. DESCRIBER CRITIQUE

Appropriateness / adaptability / technical quality:

The course materials are quite repetitive. Some teachers also may find the course lacking in "meat." In the Coordinators Handbook, the producers respond to these objections by stating that (1) research and their experience with Minicourses indicate that repetition in various forms markedly increases learning of the teaching skills; and (2) the Minicourse is directed toward "being able to use" and not just "learning about" skills, the number of skills presented must be limited. The format permits little flexibility in content or delivery – it is intended for use with minimum modification. However, the course could be employed in varied contexts and for differing purposes. The possibility of substituting audio for video recording has already been mentioned, and might cut down considerably on the expense of using the materials. Handbooks and films are attractive and of high technical quality. The Teachers Handbook is occasionally wordy.

Content accuracy/social fairness/community acceptance issues:

This material is based on current educational theory about accommodating for individual differences within a classroom. It is also reflective of the developer concerns that students need to learn how to work independently and therefore should be systematically introduced to the process. Some teachers (or other researchers) may question the proposals made in the material because of different perspectives.

No disturing biases are evident. An effort obviously has been made to include in the films teachers and pupils of differing sexes and racial/ethnic backgrounds. There would appear to be no problems with community acceptance if the ideas presented in the material were implemented in the classroom.

Overall summary/comment:

This is a field tested (see information under 6.2 of this Description) and highly transportable training package that appears to be effective in developing the teaching skills presented. A major strength of the package is that it is largely self-administering (given minimal administrative support). It is most appropriate for inservice since those using it must have access to a classroom for a continuing basis.

A number of materials bound into the Teachers Handbook are not reusable, requiring purchase of additional handbooks for teachers taking the course in follow-on applications. The optional pupil materials provided in the Handbook must be reproduced by teachers to obtain multiple copies. (If the teacher checklists and lesson planning pages were also reproduced for use by individual teachers, the Teacher Handbooks could be reused many times.)

D. USER CRITIQUE

User(s): Two teachers; fourth and fifth grade. The ages and number of years experience are not known. Work primarily with low socio-economic racially mixed students. Educational points-of-view not known. *Note:* The teachers reviewed the material at the request of Project ARIE (at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development).

Summary of critique:

OBJECTIVES: The reviewers agreed the objectives were clearly stated but "too wordy" because the teachers had a limited time to review the materials, they were unable to state whether the objectives matched what they would have wanted to learn from the course.

CONTENT: In regard to *scope of the content* they felt their purpose for wanting to use the materials would be sufficiently covered, but they found a lack of application of the skills in the normal classroom situation demonstrated. Two specific statements made by both teachers: "A cross section of children's behavior was not shown. The children were attentive; they were not disruptive and did not seem to be behavior problems." "Nothing was shown on general classroom management." In addition, the *sequence of content,* they felt,did not make any difference in the use of the materials.

DELIVERY: The reviewers stated they felt the films and handbook were too repetitious. Because the film sequences were rehearsed, they regarded the dialogue between teacher and student as not being spontaneous enough. In commenting on the need for a facilitator, they agreed it could be used by an individual without the aid of another teacher or coordinator, but thought one would be helpful in organizing a large group of teachers.

ASSESSMENT: In terms of assessing what was learned, the reviewers stated they felt the assessment materials in the product provided adequate evaluation of what they would have learned from using the product.

OVERALL COMMENTS: They commented that there should have been more ideas to apply the skills to a specific subject area. As far as recommending the course to others they stated "we would recommend the course for college and for use by districts with beginning teachers." They were concerned that the films did not show a classroom with thirty pupils and the management of classroom space.

SPECIAL NOTE: The above critique was done by reviewing the materials -- not as a result of actual use and this evaluation should be considered with that in mind.